



SAVING LIVES AND PROTECTING PROPERTY

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**Municipal Building
2261 Van Horne Road
(Route 206)
Belle Mead, New Jersey 08502
(908) 359-8211
FAX (908) 359-2006**

**Bureau of Fire Prevention
Roy Mondì**

Tents, Canopies and Other Membrane Structures

A Fire Safety Permit is required for tents over 900 square feet or over 30 feet in any dimension. Multiple tents in close vicinity within 5 feet of each other require a permit as well. Each check box and numbered item in this document is required by law. Recommendations are indicated as “recommendations”.

Any questions pertaining to the requirements can be viewed in full using the 2015 New Jersey International Fire Code. This document does not contain the full extent of the fire code.

Summary: All of the following requirements are required by New Jersey State law. Some administrative functions have been added to assist the Fire Code Official for review of the required documentation. If some of requirements here are not familiar to the parties involved with Tents or Membrane structures the Fire Code has been updated and education seminars from state agencies have clarified the requirements, which correlate to safety of people and property. If any of the following items cannot be met, it will affect the set up and the requirement to change or relocate items may be implemented. If any legal requirements contained within this notice are not understood, a representative should reach out to the Fire Code Official for clarification.

Tent or Membrane Structure Construction Requirements:

If any of the following items I-VII is part of the Tent or Membrane Structure then a Uniform Construction Code Permit is required.

- I. If the tent, tensioned membrane structure, or canopy is more than 140 feet in any dimension.
- II. The tent, tensioned membrane structure, or canopy is more than 16,800 feet
 - a. **Note:** Multiple tents within distances 5 feet or less shall be considered 1 tent and shall meet the all of the following of this document and Chapter 31 of the New Jersey International Fire Code 2015.
- III. If the tent, tensioned membrane structure, or canopy is up for 180 days or more.
- IV. Tent, tensioned membrane structure, or canopy is set up January through March 31st and all of December.
- V. Permanent anchoring system or foundation original installation.
- VI. Installation on a portable anchoring system each time tent is erected.
- VII. The tent, tensioned membrane structure, or canopy has platforms or bleachers greater than 11 feet in height.

Action: Apply for a construction permit through the Construction Office. Failure to apply for a construction permit, which is different than a Fire Safety Permit will result in a denial of a fire safety permit.

Tent Documents Required:

***Note:** If you have a tent vendor request this information prior to submitting tent permits.*

- ☐ Certificate executed by an approved testing laboratory certifying that the tent and certain components such as sidewalls, drops and tarpaulins are composed of material meeting the flame propagation performance material or treated with flame retardant in an approved manner in accordance with Chapter 31 of the 2015 New Jersey International Fire Code and NFPA 701.
- ☐ All tents have a permanently affixed label bearing the identification of size and fabric and material type.
- ☐ An affidavit or affirmation shall be submitted to the fire official and on premises of the tent regarding information relative to the flame propagation performance criteria of the fabric.
 - 1. Name and address of the owners of the tent or air supported structure.
 - 2. Date the fabric was last treated with flame-retardant solution.
 - 3. Trade name or kind of chemical used in treatment.
 - 4. Name of person or firm treating the material.
 - 5. Name of testing agency and test standard by which the fabric was tested.

Exception: Vinyl Tents with a certificate of flame resistance from the manufacture meeting NFPA 701, then the above 2-5 will be considered as met.

Tent Guidelines/Checklist:

Note: The following is not the full extent of the code. See N.J.A.C. 5:70-3, 3101.1.

- ☐ Create and maintain inspection schedule and records of tent, air supported structure, or tension membrane. Inspection shall be done at regular intervals not less than 2 times per permit use for installations over 30 days. This shall cover maintenance, anchors, and fabric inspections.
- ☐ Tents used for cooking and over 16,800 square feet shall have a minimum separation of 5 feet from buildings, other tents, vehicles or internal combustion engines. **Exception:** Other cooking tents maybe acceptable; speak with Fire Code Official.
- ☐ Cooking tents are required to be separated by 20 feet from other tents with an occupant load of 50 or greater.
- ☐ Tents or membrane structures shall be adequately roped, braced and anchored to withstand elements of weather and prevent collapsing.
- ☐ Means of Egress shall be approved and in accordance with section 3102.12. See chart for means of egress requirements. Means of egress shall be readily identifiable and shall not require special knowledge or effort to open. See table on next page.

TABLE 3103.12.2
MINIMUM NUMBER OF MEANS OF EGRESS AND MEANS OF
EGRESS WIDTHS FROM TEMPORARY MEMBRANE STRUCTURES AND TENTS

OCCUPANT LOAD	MINIMUM NUMBER OF MEANS OF EGRESS	MINIMUM WIDTH OF EACH MEANS OF EGRESS (inches)	MINIMUM WIDTH OF EACH MEANS OF EGRESS (inches)
		Tent	Membrane Structure
10 to 199	2	72	36
200 to 499	3	72	72
500 to 999	4	96	72
1,000 to 1,999	5	120	96
2,000 to 2,999	6	120	96
Over 3,000	7	120	96

For SI: 1 inch = 25.4 mm.

- ☐ Exits shall be spaced at equal intervals around the perimeter of the tent or membrane and exits shall be located such that all points are 100 feet or less from an exit.
- ☐ Exits shall be clearly marked and installed at required doorways and where otherwise necessary to indicate clearly the direction of travel where exits service an occupant load of 50 or more.
- ☐ Fire extinguishers shall be inspected, tested, and maintained. Annual Inspection has been conducted by a State Certified New Jersey contractor. ABC type required. Class K is required for grease related cooking and solid cooking fuel.

Recommendation for Events: Maintain spare fire extinguishers (Current Inspection) for vendors whom do not have extinguishers or fail an inspection.

- ☐ Fire extinguisher(s) is mounted with approved mounting hardware from the manufacturer in a visible non-obscured location. (Do not zip tie or improperly mount extinguisher or leave on ground). Mount fire extinguishers with the handle no high than 5 feet and no lower than 4in from the bottom of the cylinder.
- ☐ Tents being used as an assembly area shall post and occupant load sign. Provide tent sizes to the Fire Code Official and get Occupant Load Sign.
- ☐ LP-Gas containers shall be located outside or on the exterior perimeter of a tent or canopy.
- ☐ LP-Gas containers shall have safety release valve pointed away for tent or canopy.
- ☐ LP-Gas containers shall be protected and secure. Containers shall be securely fastened in place to prevent unauthorized movement or falling.
- ☐ LP-Gas containers shall be positioned a minimum of 5 feet from any heat producing appliance.

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- ☐ LP-Gas containers shall be tested for leaks prior the Bureau of Fire Safety's Inspection. Connections will be tested by the fire code official's designee as a second means of protection and safety.
- ☐ Smoking shall be prohibited "Approved No Smoking Signs" shall be installed conspicuously.
- ☐ Tents shall have 1 crowd manager for every 250 occupants.
- ☐ Combustible materials such as hay, straw, shavings or similar materials shall not be located in any tent or membrane of assembly occupancy.

I attest that the above duties are understood and understand that an inspection will be verifying compliance with this document and all referenced code that may not be contained in this document. I am aware that in the event a violation of the fire code is discovered that changes may have to be implemented.

Event Manager/Agent Name

Signature

Date

FAQS:

This is a lot of information and is overwhelming, what should I do?

The information contained in the Fire Code is a lot, however it is there for some very important reasons. We recommend your organization assigning a person(s) to review or walk the grounds prior to the event; communicate with the Fire Code Official prior to the event occurring to prevent any hold ups during or right before the event. We created this form with a checklist to make the code clear and easy to follow and reduce any significant changes prior to the start of the event.

We have never had to do this before, and this may affect my standard set up, why now?

The requirements listed above are life safety and property protection based and not doing it in the past should never be a reason to not implement the safety requirements. Our objective is to educate and improve set ups to meet the law regardless of events in the past. Our office understands that there may be complications and we will actively offer suggestions or recommendations to achieve a code compliant environment as well as meeting the needs of the event staff. The Fire Code was updated in 2018, which includes additional requirement as well as sponsored education programs which address fire code regulations, which have notified local authority having jurisdiction of the new and existing requirements that pose risks. Historical incidents have highly influenced these code changes that will protect life and property. Some accidents are not preventable however, it is important to understand that this also will reduce claims of negligence, litigation, civil or criminal related offenses in the event an accident does occur.